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STATE FOR AF/SPG, PRM, AND ALSO PASS USAID/W
USAID FOR DCHA SUDAN TEAM, AFR/SP
NAIROBI FOR USAID/DCHA/OFDA, USAID/REDSO, AND FAS
GENEVA FOR NKYLOH
NAIROBI FOR SFO
NSC FOR JBRAUSE, NSC/AFRICA FOR TSHORTLEY
USUN FOR TMALY
BRUSSELS FOR PLERNER

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: EAID PREF PGOV PHUM SOCI SU

SUBJECT: SUDAN - SQUATTER VILLAGE DEMOLISHED IN GEZIRA STATE

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¶11. This is an action cable - see para 9.

¶12. Summary: Heavily armed police surrounded a squatter village in El Gezira State and demolished several hundred houses early morning on August 16. Villagers had been in negotiations with the Government of National Unity, but disagreed on the assigned plot for relocation of their community. Many members of the resident committee were arrested, three people suffered gunshot wounds, one child died, and one person was severely beaten. UN D/SRSG HC briefed the international community late afternoon on August 16 and asked for diplomatic interventions. See para 8 for request for guidance. End summary.

¶13. The UN Deputy Resident Representative and Humanitarian Coordinator (D/SRSG HC), Manuel Aranda da Silva, called an urgent meeting to brief donor representatives on the forceful evacuation of the squatter camp Dar Assalam in El Gezira State 40 km south of Khartoum. A team of three human rights and protection officers from the United Nations Mission in Sudan (UNMIS) assessed the situation and found that about 12,000 residents of the squatter village had been evicted and their houses destroyed.

Background

¶14. Dar Assalam is an area occupied by internally displaced persons who fled the severe drought in the late 1970s and 80s. The Government of National Unity (GNU) has frequently evicted squatters there, and tension about their presence is long-standing.

¶15. In January 2006, the residents formed a committee to negotiate an agreement with the GNU for an acceptable relocation. This committee is supported by various political groups, including the Popular Committee, the Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army, Umma Party/Giada Gamaza, the Chief of Meseria, and the Sudanese Group of Human Rights and Youth Association. A Memorandum of Understanding was signed spelling out the conditions for relocation.

¶16. The area determined by the GNU for relocation is located about five kilometers south of the squatter village and is known as Block 14. It is surrounded by a number of factories, some of which pollute the environment. The squatter committee had commissioned a study and learned that about 65 percent of the area assigned for relocation is not inhabitable due to pollution. The GNU denies

these findings and claims that Block 4 is an acceptable location under certain conditions. A document laying out these conditions reportedly has been made available to the residents.

Findings

¶7. The UNMIS assessment team learned from the residents that at 0800 on August 16, thousands of heavily armed policemen surrounded the village, placed twelve tanks and a number of machine guns mounted on police vehicles around the village and began to demolish hundreds of homes with bulldozers. Concurrently, many members of the resident committee were arrested, three people suffered gunshot wounds, one child was killed, and one person was severely beaten, ending up with a broken leg. Later reports indicated the death of three persons.

UNMIS Action Taken

¶8. D/SRSG HC called two senior GNU officials: Kosti Manibe, Minister of Humanitarian Affairs, who claimed to have no information on the incident, and the Human Rights Commissioner. (Comment: It is worth noting that the majority of the squatters are Darfurians. End comment.) D/SRSG HC will report to the UN Secretary General and expects him to engage the GNU. He was asking

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the international community to use contacts within the GNU and the Wali (Governor) of El Gezira State to call attention to the human rights violations and pressure the GNU to cease the eviction activities.

¶9. Action requested: Post requests instructions and talking points to present an appropriate demarche to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

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